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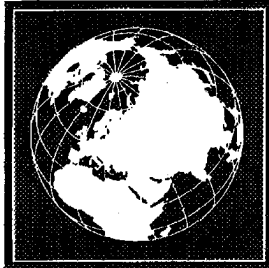
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Director of Central Intelligence

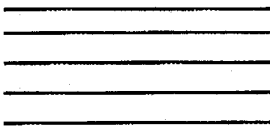
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North Korea: P'yongyang Unsure of Next Steps on Peace Talks

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3 February 1998

North Korea:

P'yongyang Unsure of Next Steps on Peace Talks

North Korea's proposal last week to shift the interim four-party meeting from 12 February in Beijing to early next month in Geneva suggests P'yongyang remains undecided about how to deal with South Korean President-elect Kim Tae-chung. Senior North Korean officials view Kim's election as an unpleasant surprise

— Kim has yet to articulate an official North Korea policy, particularly on economic aid, *suggesting the North may wait to hear how Kim addresses this issue in his 25 February inaugural address before revisiting the agenda for the plenary four-party talks previously scheduled to resume on 16 March in Geneva.*

— *Moving the interim four-party meeting to neutral Geneva—the site of US–North Korea Agreed Framework negotiations—would allow the North to avoid the appearance of a substantial Chinese role inherent in a Beijing venue; the proposal, moreover, is consistent with P'yongyang's continuing focus on recasting the four-party talks as principally bilateral negotiations with Washington.*